



## THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

### Draft Minutes of the Trust Board meeting

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Time: 3:59pm – 6:23pm

Venue: TCAT Personal Development Centre, Bridgewater High School

Trustees		
HP	Howard Platt	<b>Chair</b>
LW	Linda Waterson	Trustee
SY	Sheila Yates	Trustee
SW	Stephen Whatmore	Trustee
ST	Stuart Titchard <i>left at 5:13pm</i>	Trustee
SR	Susan Richardson	Trustee
JC	John Cartwright	Trustee
SD	Susila Davis	Trustee
AMC	Andy Moorcroft	<b>CEO</b>
In attendance		
TL	Tim Long <i>left at 5:53pm</i>	Executive Principal Secondary and Sixth Form
VB	Vicky Briggs	Executive Principal - Primary
DMG	Damian McGuire <i>arrived at 4:13pm</i>	Finance Director
AL	Adrienne Lang	Operations Director
BL	Ben Logan	Head of Human Resources
CHP	Claire Howarth-Platt	Clerk

Documents Circulated prior to the meeting	
TCAT Trustee Skills Audit Minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 9 <sup>th</sup> December 21 Updated Trust Board and LGB Terms of Reference CEO Report to the Board Trust Growth Central Structures Catering Project Update TCAT Estate Management Plan TCAT Risk Management Action Plan Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	Minutes of the Quality and Standards committee Meeting held 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2022 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 Response to consultation on Primary admissions arrangements Great Sankey Primary Admissions Arrangements 2023-2024 TCAT Plus Overview TCAT Gender Pay Gap Report

### Part one – non confidential business

<b>The meeting was quorate</b> <b>The meeting opened at 3:59pm</b>	
1.	<b>Welcome</b> HP opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.



	The Board expressed gratitude to Tim Long, who would be retiring in September, for his contributions to Bridgewater High School and TCAT.
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Absence/Apologies/Non Attendance</b></p> <p>Apologies had been received from Jane Griffiths. Apologies were received from Lacy Muir and Phil McEwan during the meeting. John Monaghan was absent without apologies.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> Trustees consented to the absences of JG, LM, JM and PM</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Register of Interests</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed that there were no changes to the register of business interests.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Declaration of personal interests</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest for any items on this agenda.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Membership and Organisation</b></p> <p>- <b>Trustee Skills Audit</b></p> <p>The results of the Skills audit would be collated and reported to the Board in the summer term.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Trustees to return the completed skills audit to AL by the 19<sup>th</sup> April.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b></p> <p><b>a) Matters arising</b> There were no matters arising that would not be covered by this agenda.</p> <p><b>b) Action log</b> <i>Consideration to be given on becoming a Member rather than a Trustee, if a vacancy arises.</i> This remained an item for Trustees to consider.</p> <p><i>Group visits of Trustees to schools to be arranged.</i> Due to COVID-19 Trustee visits to schools had been delayed and would be scheduled for the summer term.</p> <p><i>AM to further consider a number of the 21 Questions for MAT Board</i> Completed.</p> <p>Training and induction for new governors had been developed and was available on the learning platform.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> The minutes of the meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Terms of Reference</b></p> <p><b>a) Quality and Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The inclusion of Safeguarding in the Terms of Reference for the Quality and Standards committee had been discussed during the recent committee meeting.</li> <li>The suggested changes had been made to the Terms of Reference and shared with Trustees.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolved:</b> Trustees approved and adopted the updated Terms of Reference.</p>



8.	<p><b>CEO Report</b></p> <p>The CEO report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was taken as read. AMC provided a brief overview of key points.</p> <p><i>COVID-19</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools were still dealing with COVID-19 related disruption.</li> <li>• There were high absence rates amongst students and staff. Absences were shorter.</li> <li>• Student attendance was around 91% across the trust.</li> <li>• The COVID-19 situation created some complexity with exams: guidance was being generated for students outlining the procedures in various circumstances such as COVID-19 positive asymptomatic or symptomatic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees questioned whether national guidelines in relation to exam procedures and COVID-19 had been released.</b></p> <p>Guidance was awaited. Guidance has previously been issued later; it was anticipated that infection rates would be reviewed nearer the time to determine an appropriate course of action.</p> <p><b>Governors sought to clarify if this meant that a hybrid model of teacher assessed grades and exams may be utilised.</b></p> <p>It was possible and highlighted the importance of the mock exams.</p> <p><b>Trustees noted that student attendance was currently around 91% and questioned what attendance or attendance targets would have been pre-COVID-19.</b></p> <p>Attendance would typically have been around 95% in the secondary schools, and slightly higher in the primary schools.</p> <p>The national average is currently 89%.</p> <p>The absence rates were a combination of the COVID-19 and Persistent Absence with some students reluctant to return to school.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned whether there were many Year 11 students absent with Long COVID-19 and whether there was any guidance in relation to the same.</b></p> <p>There were not many students absent with long COVID-19 and no guidance in relation to the issue. There continued to be spikes in Year 11 absence; students were preparing to sit exams that had missed and continued to miss large amounts of time from school.</p> <p>Absence was generally experienced in waves. There continued to be an online offer but this was not as intensive. Schools were endeavouring to work through the disruption but the impact on staff and pupils should not be underestimated.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned the absence rate amongst staff.</b></p> <p>The absence rate amongst staff is high.</p> <p>Cover costs were high with 117% of the allocated budget for cover already having been spent. A further 16% had been added to the end of the year.</p> <p>Supply costs were impacted by absence rates and by increases in the charges from agencies.</p> <p>Pupil attendance was also being impacted by other issues such as gastroenteritis and Chicken Pox outbreaks.</p> <p><i>Ukraine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue in the Ukraine were being handled sensitively in school.</li> <li>• All schools were involved in fundraising efforts.</li> </ul>
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- The Education Secretary had announced that 100,000 Ukrainian students were expected to enter the school system nationally.

**Trustees sought to clarify what 100,000 pupils was as a percentage of the school population.**

It would be a very small percentage.

It was anticipated that Ukrainian families coming to the country would likely be concentrated in particular areas and therefore schools were likely to see either a large number of students or very few.

*Energy Costs*

- Rising energy costs and building costs were starting to have an impact.
- At a meeting with the Local Authority and builders, it was advised that the costs of services and materials had increased by 50% in the last three years.

*DMG joined the meeting at 4:13pm*

- The new wellbeing platform, TCAT+ had been launched.
- The government's levelling up paper held significance.
- AMC was involved in the levelling up workshops taking place locally.
- Priestley College had received a thematic visit about T Levels from Ofsted. There was no judgement but the feedback had been positive.
- TL would depart from his role at Bridgewater High school in August.
- A two-day interview process had taken place with Trustees and Governors; after which Kieran Powell was appointed as Principal Designate.

*IT*

- A meeting had been held on the 21<sup>st</sup> March regarding the IT changes and progress was on track.
- The entire school management system would move to Arbor on the 19<sup>th</sup> April.
- There was training ongoing.
- The change would be beneficial in relation to sharing information and analysing the same.

**Trustees questioned whether the system would be ready by the 19<sup>th</sup> April.**

This was confirmed. There had been a lot of work taking place and the Arbor change management process was excellent.

Teething problems could be expected but there was confidence that the system would work on launch day.

*School Meals*

- The transition of school meals in the Primary schools was ongoing.

*Awards*

- There had been several nominations and winners across the Trust for the Warrington Guardian Education Awards.
- High School Headteacher of the Year: Beverley Scott-Herron
- New Teacher of the Year: Jo Perkins
- High School Student of the Year: Tailun Sun

*Student Numbers*



- Overall student numbers for September were positive.
- Padgate Academy was not at capacity.
- The remaining Trust schools would be full.
- Primary admission numbers were difficult to predict going forward.
- Projections across Warrington were on a downward trend; however, with building work and movement into the town numbers may increase.

**Trustees cautioned that given the type of properties being developed around the town it was likely that children moving into the area would be older than primary age.**

The comment was noted.

Further information was being sought from the LA. The LA had advised that they expected all schools to be full going forward.

#### *Penketh High School*

- Funds had been negotiated to develop the site with the LA.
- The LA had advised that they could contribute £2.5million subject to cabinet approval.
- The Trust would commit £1.5million to develop the site.
- The Thompson building had been closed on the school site during the week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> March as it had been deemed potentially unsafe.
- It was hoped that the funding under discussion would enable the building of a new block to replace the Thompson building.
- Replacing the block would enable the school to maintain a pupil admission number (PAN) of 210.
- The LA had advised that there would be a need for a PAN of at least 240, and up to 270 at the school.
- The development of the Fiddler's Ferry site looked set to go ahead and would likely result in further funds for the development of the school site.
- Bids had been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) to rebuild another block at Penketh HS.

**Trustees sought to clarify the PAN at the school, questioning whether 210 was the agreed PAN for the school.**

An increase in the PAN was conditional on the development of the site.

The school were admitting above PAN and would have 218 pupils joining in September.

There was the possibility that the PAN would increase to 240.

An increase in the PAN does not require consultation and any increase would therefore be brought to Trustees for approval.

#### *Estates management*

AL reported to the Board.

- Estates management was up to date.
- An estate management plan was in development which would be submitted to the Finance, HR and Operations Committee. Further information was awaited from the ESFA.
- Condition surveys were being updated and an area of focus on the plan would be decarbonisation.
- The project at Bridgewater High School was on target and within the budget of £4.8million.
- Recent rises in costs had presented some challenges but this was being managed and it would come in on budget.



**Trustees questioned whether funds from the LA were being received on time.**

The LA were providing income before bills were paid and cashflow was therefore good. Confirmation of the latest value had been received on the 24<sup>th</sup> March but had not been reviewed. The funds would be applied for on the 25<sup>th</sup> March.

**Trustees sought to clarify the amount to reclaim estimating the figure at around £3million.**

There was a lot to reclaim but an exact figure was not available.

- Confirmation of the Specialist Equipment Allocation (SEA) was required along with confirmation of the funding available for Penketh High School in order to move forward with other projects.
- The change over to Arbor was a key focus, along with the IT plan to move systems and processes forward.

*Budget*

DMG reported to the Board

- The budget review had been completed.
- The position was improved on the budget set at the start of the year.
- A few issues relating to one school had been addressed; their budget review had been changed resulting in a small surplus.
- The focus was now on finishing the year and bringing it in on budget; there had been some challenges as a result of COVID-19 particularly supply costs, and it was hoped that after the Easter break things would settle.
- Work had started on the budget for 2022-2023.
- The recommendation relating to teachers pay had been received and was larger than expected.
- The government was recommending an increase of 8% at the bottom of the pay scale with a graduated reduction to 3% at the top.
- All salaries would be re-costed based on the recommendation.
- The recommendation for the following year was a further 6% increase at the bottom of the scale, bringing the starting salary for teachers to £30,000, with a more modest increase in the rest of the scale.
- There would be no further funding other than what is already committed.

*IT*

- Abtech had confirmed the specification for the server at Priestley, which is the main hub.
- This would be going out to tender and was likely to cost in the region of £150,000.

**Trustees questioned whether this funding would be taken from the SEA.**

It would not, as the SEA could not be spent on IT.

A discussion would be required regarding the Trust contributing to the cost.

**Trustees commented that the cost would need to be shared across the Trust, as it was to the benefit of all academies.**

*Revised costs plan*

- Efforts were ongoing to gain more information regarding potential price increases.
- An increase of 5% was to be allocated for none-energy costs.
- The cost of paper is increasing due to supply issues across Europe.
- Consideration was being given to managing the situation; information was being gathered from academies regarding the quantities of paper being used.



- The Trust were accessing the national scheme for Gas.
- The cost of living also needed to be taken into account and a review of what is affordable across the Trust would need to be taken alongside the national recommendations.

**Trustees questioned whether there was an active programme to drive down the use of paper in schools, and whether that could be measured.**

In some areas the schools use restrictions which help to reduce the amount used.

It was necessary to educate staff in different ways to approach tasks using paper.

Some schools prefer printed documents the issue needed to be left at a local level for staff to determine how best to deliver education.

The issue with supply may force more paperless working.

Trustees commented that there may be an issue with standards as Ofsted would want to see what is going on in books and folders.

Schools had moved away from paper for administration having moved to app usage with parents.

**Trustees highlighted that due to the rising cost of living some families may need to make difficult decisions such as whether to retain their broadband.**

The Trust received funds from Warrington Youth Zone for connectivity which had not been used.

Funds were therefore available and the Trust would be able to support families in that situation.

**Trustees sought to clarify that the £10,000 received had not been spent and whether that could be clawed back.**

The devices had been paid for, but monies received specifically for connectivity were still available and were on the books as a creditor.

The Trust had not been asked to return the funds.

**Trustees expressed concern that paying for connectivity could become a forever cost and may not support education if used for other reasons by families.**

It would be possible to supply dongles with limited connectivity to provide a control element.

VB reported to the Board.

- The current focus was on follow up work after the Peer reviews.
- There had been significant work taking place at Penketh South.
- Primary academies were preparing for SATS.
- Joint moderation had taken place across the schools which had been useful.

TL reported to the Board.

- Curriculum reviews had taken place.
- Lead practitioners had been deployed into Padgate when needed.
- Some work was slightly delayed as a result, but the need was greater at Padgate.
- Those lead practitioners were being recalled to focus on reviews during the next term.

BL reported to the Board

- The agreed pay award for support staff had been implemented and thanks were extended to the administrative teams in schools that had processed that.
- Acute COVID-19 issues were increasing and impacting on sickness absence rates.
- Overall absence was well managed and within targets.
- The Trust were aware of and managing cases that needed to be progressed further.
- Staff were being supporting to come back into work.





9.	<p><b>Strategic Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Strategic Action Plan had been updated and progress made since the last review.</li> <li>• Improvements had been made in the talent management strategy for support staff and getting the best use out of the apprenticeship levy.</li> <li>• This would be brought back to Trustees after Easter.</li> <li>• The HR system was problematic and was tied in with the IT move.</li> <li>• The system was being piloted with Priestley and may be rolled out after Easter.</li> <li>• If the new system were not in place by the summer it would be removed and an alternative sought</li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees questioned what the fallback position would be if the system were removed.</b> Arbor provides some of the functions required and other options would be explored. Priestley requires an electronic system; however, the technical capacity within the IT team to get the updates in place is an urgent priority.</p> <p>JC offered to provide any support within his area of expertise. AL advised that integration and oversight were the main areas of concern. There was no adoption issue. The issue for schools was integration: what had been promised did not work properly and there was therefore reluctance to put in a system that would add burden to the schools.</p> <p><b>Trustees sought to clarify what the expectation of the outcome of the situation was.</b> Overall optimistic. Civica had released a number of updates and it was necessary to ensure that there was sufficient capacity within the IT service to incorporate those.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried whether the provider were accepting responsibility for the issues.</b> The Trust had engaged with them. There were 9 versions of SIMS across the Trust that needed to be integrated, Civica had advised that this could be done but it was more problematic than anticipated. When the decision was taken to move the MIS system integrating SIMS became a pointless endeavour. The responsibility for the issues is a shared one. A new solution needed to be found.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned whether the system would have been selected if the decision on Arbor had been made first.</b> Arbor is not an HR system and would not provide enough functionality, it may however, have influenced the choice of HR system.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned whether there was any risk of litigation in the long term with the transition of HR files into a digital format.</b> Employers are obliged under data protection to delete former employee records 6 years after they leave employment. Where there is an accident on record the time frame is extended to 12 years. Where there is an allegation recorded the information is retained in the safeguarding record 10 years past their age of retirement. There is a clear delineation of responsibilities.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned what would happen if there were an allegation and evidence was not available to refute.</b> Employers are required to delete the data, except in the case of accidents where the data is held for longer.</p>
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10.	<p><b>Risk Management Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were some emerging risks including rising energy costs.</li> <li>• COVID-19 continued to present some risk.</li> <li>• The risk management plan had been updated taking these issues into account.</li> <li>• Discussion in the recent Audit and Risk committee focused on IT security and the plan for managing a complete loss of IT functions.</li> <li>• The Risk Management Plan is a working document and responsive to emerging need.</li> <li>• The level of risk for some identified issues on the plan had been changed.</li> <li>• No risks had been removed; a record would be maintained of any removed risks.</li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Sub Committee Reports</b></p> <p><b>a) Remuneration 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff had received a performance review.</li> <li>• The exercise had worked well and most people were satisfied.</li> </ul> <p><b>b) Quality and Standards 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b></p> <p>SY provided an overview of the discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was reassuring to note that the Trust reviewed the safeguarding practices in all academies and there had been no major issues identified.</li> <li>• Attendance was discussed and it was highlighted that there were students who wanted to continue to study at home.</li> <li>• The peer to peer reviews had been useful and provided opportunity to discuss each school in depth.</li> <li>• Lead practitioner reviews had been received from subject leaders in some areas and provided a good overview subject performance.</li> <li>• Keeping lead practitioner reviews on the agenda would give Trustees a clear insight into the academies.</li> <li>• Trustees highlighted that with 10 schools this level of scrutiny was challenging, and it was suggested that scrutiny at this level of detail should be undertaken by exception.</li> <li>• The committee had dedicated more time to schools that were experiencing issues.</li> <li>• The Hubs were discussed: there were 29 hubs it was necessary to ensure that they are all functioning effectively and purposefully.</li> <li>• SEND was also discussed which would increasingly become a focus.</li> </ul> <p><b>c) Audit and Risk 10<sup>th</sup> March</b></p> <p>LW provided an overview of the discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alan Farquharson had resigned from the committee.</li> <li>• John Cartwright had agreed to join the committee membership.</li> <li>• A presentation had been received from the internal auditors.</li> <li>• An update on progress against the audit plan was provided.</li> <li>• The Business Continuity Review returned a strong grading.</li> <li>• A discussion was held around emerging business continuity risks, in particular cyber attacks and increasing costs.</li> <li>• The Procurement Review returned a substantial opinion with 5 medium and 5 low level recommendations.</li> <li>• There had been good progress since the last review but there remained areas to improve.</li> <li>• A detailed discussion was held around strengthening procurement.</li> </ul>



- The risk management plan was discussed with attention given to increasing inflation, actions taken to alleviate the impact of the staff pay freeze and the potential loss of staff due to rising costs.

#### **d) Finance, HR and Operations 10<sup>th</sup> March**

The minutes of the Finance, HR and Operations committee meeting had not been shared as they had not been reviewed for accuracy prior to this meeting.

ST provided an overview of the discussion.

- Management accounts to January were discussed.
- Staffing and supply costs were exceeding the original projections; the committee requested assurance that there was an expected drop in that expenditure which was given, although there remained some risk.
- Overall the predicted surplus across the Trust was £412,000.
- Energy costs were discussed and most contracts were fixed for the next 6 months.
- Updates regarding the catering project were shared.
- The staff pulse survey was discussed and Trustees queried the low uptake rates and reliability of the results.
- Business and compliance reviews had been completed at all academies.
- Updates were provided in relation to IT and MIS changes.

#### *Staff Pulse survey*

- Trustees discussed the Staff Pulse survey in more detail.
- The survey is issued every two weeks.
- Completion rates needed further consideration.
- Some staff were not seeing the survey and the Trust team were in discussion with Headteachers about increasing completion rates.
- Trustees commented that it was necessary for staff to take ownership of the surveys.
- Headteachers had advised that the conclusions were useful if staff completed the survey.

#### **Trustees questioned whether there had been any feedback from staff regarding their thoughts about filling the surveys in so regularly.**

The reaction had been positive from those using it. The uptake was around 30% across the Trust.

- There were areas for development and things that need focus.
- Communication was brought up in a number of schools. A weekly bulletin is sent out but was not being read by staff, this raised questions around how to help staff feel more informed.
- The survey was designed to identify trends over time.

#### **Trustees noted that around 30% of the workforce were completing the surveys and questioned whether it could be identified who was responding.**

The survey was completely anonymous. It was possible to identify the type of role of a respondent (whether they were teaching or support staff), but it was important that staff felt secure in the knowledge that responses are anonymous.

#### *ST left the meeting at 5:13pm*

- Some academies had much higher return rates.
- Trustees cautioned that with a small uptake there could be extreme views returned.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was necessary to focus on recurring issues to guide practice to avoid over or under responding to concerns.</li> </ul>
12.	<p><b>Admissions Final Approval</b> AL reported to the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the previous meeting the Board had approved the draft Admissions Policy subject to consultation.</li> <li>The Local Authority had responded during consultation to recommend a clarification in relation to the definition of a staff member. This had been incorporated into the policy. There had been no other responses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees sought to clarify that the recommendation of the LA was to be accepted, and whether the admissions criteria would be for two years.</b> This was confirmed, the recommendation had been incorporated into the policy and a two year criteria was a requirement due to the admissions criteria. The change made did not constitute a policy change and was only a point of clarification to define 'who' an employee is.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned whether new staff requesting priority access for their child would receive it.</b> They would not.</p> <p><b>Trustees sought to clarify whether exceptions could be made.</b> This was confirmed. It would be necessary to validate the category under which the individual was a special case for instance if they had been recruited to a role with a skills shortage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A definition of a member of staff had not been included in the draft policy; however, the LA advised that it was best practice to do so.</li> <li>The definition had been included but this was dictated by statutory and legal requirements.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees sought to clarify that the information would be shared with the Headteachers of relevant schools.</b> This was confirmed. It applied to the three primary schools that wanted to change the policy. Broomfields Junior School did not require the change as the school does not have a nursery or infant classes. The review and decision-making processes in relation to admissions are delegated to Local Governing Boards. Should any other schools wish to incorporate the changes they would be able to but would need to go through consultation next year.</p> <p><b>Trustees sought further clarification that staff requesting a priority place would need to have been employed at the school for a minimum of two years.</b> The staff member would need either to have been employed for two years or have filled a vacant post with a demonstrable skills shortage or a long term hard to fill vacancy.</p> <p><b>Trustees clarified that they wanted Headteachers to be able to manage the situation.</b> Headteachers would have to apply the clause. It is a statutory admissions code. If the situation arose it would be reviewed. The clause would only apply if a nursery is oversubscribed.</p>



	<p><b>Resolved:</b> The primary admissions arrangements 2023-2024 were determined.</p>
13.	<p><b>TCAT+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee wellbeing was a high priority within the sector.</li> <li>The DfE had launched the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter which featured 11 commitments that employers are encouraged to work towards.</li> <li>Some things were in place including, talent management, policies and the measuring of wellbeing initiatives across the Trust.</li> <li>The TCAT rewards portal had been reviewed and expanded with Reward Gateway to emphasise the wellbeing reward and recognition elements TCAT can offer.</li> <li>TCAT+ was available to all staff and offered a variety of rewards and support including signposting to local support groups and information on financial management.</li> <li>The rewards offered an extension on savings and discounts for a range of providers.</li> <li>TCAT+ should emphasise the discretionary benefits of working for the Trust.</li> <li>It could also be used as a recognition portal to acknowledge a job well done and it was hoped that this could be further developed.</li> <li>A launch video had been created and regular mail shots would go out to promote the platform.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees questioned what the take up was amongst staff and whether this was monitored and measured.</b></p> <p>The expectation was that over time there would be peaks and troughs of usage. It would need regular promotion to encourage usage.</p> <p>Those that had engaged with TCAT+ had found it beneficial</p> <p><b>Trustees sought to clarify the contributions of the external provider, questioning whether they add offers regularly.</b></p> <p>The system was dynamic. The provider had arrangements with national providers that could be extended to Trust staff.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned how the initiative had been promoted to staff and whether Governors at local level were aware.</b></p> <p>The HR committee were promoting it. A monthly email is sent to all staff and TCAT+ was publicised in that.</p> <p>Trustees suggested that Trustees and Governors should also have access to TCAT+.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> AL to issue a call out on GovernorHub for Governors and Trustees to contact BL if they wanted to join TCAT+.</p>
14	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender Pay Gap</b></li> </ul> <p>The Gender Pay Gap report had been circulated to Trustees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The methodology had been nationally set and was undertaken consistently annually.</li> <li>It was necessary to understand the reasons for any gaps and to take reasonable steps to consider any potential barriers that exist to reducing the gap.</li> <li>The information from March 2021 showed a difference in the mean hourly pay of 19.4%.</li> <li>Three quarters of the TCAT workforce is made up of women.</li> <li>There was a higher percentage of women in the lower two centiles of pay.</li> <li>Women made up half of higher earners across the Trust.</li> </ul>



- There was an obligation to consider what the Trust can have due regard to and what strategies can be adopted to manage that.
- Questions to consider included how to encourage applications from and opportunities for women to progress to more senior roles.
- There had been movement from the lower middle to upper middle quartile.
- But this had corresponded with an increase in the number of new female starters in exam invigilation and Teaching Assistant roles.

**Trustees questioned what actions would follow the publication of the report.**

A gender pay gap is a wider societal issue. The Trust needed to demonstrate that there was no bias in recruitment and selection opportunities.

There was a lower proportion of women to men applying for more senior roles, further investigation would be needed to confirm whether there was a further drop in those numbers at shortlisting.

The issue would be held in due regard and consideration given to what changes could be made to address the matter.

**Trustees questioned whether the gap amongst teaching staff only had been identified.**

The gap was higher among teachers than support staff.

There were no teachers in the lower two quartiles.

The top 5% was equally split but there were proportionally more men in the middle leader layer. Class teachers are predominantly female and it was important to look at how they could be supported and encouraged to gain promotion opportunities.

**Trustees expressed concern with regard to the findings of the report.**

This was likely to reflect a national concern.

Championing flexible working is a key element of the Education and Wellbeing charter.

Along with recruitment and selection protocols having a consistent and fair approach.

**Trustees commented that it is widely known that women are less likely to feel ready to apply for more senior roles than men and questioned what is done to support and encourage women to apply for those roles.**

This was under discussion.

Role models were helpful but flexible and part time options also needed to be looked at.

CPD was also an area for review.

Whilst there may not be bias in the selection process there are barriers.

**Trustees requested a table with the quartiles set out to better review the gaps within each quartile.**

This would be added to the report to provide context.

- It was suggested that a working group be formed to review the data and the issues.
- Trustees agreed highlighting that the issue needed to be given due regard and could not just be accepted with the report placed on the website.

**Action:** A proportionate and representative working group to be established to review the gender pay gap.



The draft meeting schedule for the Trust Board and Members Board was shared during the meeting.

**Action:** Trustees to provide feedback on the draft meeting schedule to AL by the end of term, by exception.

*TL left the meeting at 5:53pm*

## **Growth**

### *Schools*

It had been agreed to develop the Primary school sector of the Trust and as such work was taking place with two schools: Appleton Thorn Primary School and Dallam Community Primary School.

#### Appleton Thorn

- The Governing Board at Appleton Thorn requested to join the Trust as a full member.
- An approval in principle was requested. This would not equate to an immediate commitment as due diligence work was still required and the Trust would need to work with the regional schools commissioner.
- The Trust team, the school and governing board were supportive of the request.

**Trustees sought to clarify that as the school is currently under LA control it would join the Trust without any surplus or deficit.**

If there were a surplus that would come with the school, but a deficit would stay with the LA. VB advised that the school were looking to balance the budget with a surplus.

The school was a little below capacity particularly in the lower years.

It is a single form entry, which achieved an Outstanding judgement in 2010, and was expected to achieve a Good judgement now.

**Resolved:** Trustees approved in principle Appleton Thorn Primary School to join the Trust as a full member.

#### Dallam

- The Governing Board at Dallam Primary School had requested consideration for associate membership of TCAT.
- This would allow the Trust to agree to provide some services to the school and invite them to work with the Trust offering opportunity to better get to know each other and undertake some due diligence.
- After 12 months the school can request to join as a full member.

**Resolved:** Trustees approved an Associate Membership for Dallam Primary School.

#### South Wirral

- South Wirral had been supported as part of the Trust School Improvement Offer for 12 months.
- The Governing Board had requested associate membership and an agreement in principle was requested in order to determine what the offer would be for the school.
- There was further potential to work with schools on the Wirral.

**Trustees sought to clarify what it meant that the schools is a Foundation school.**

It is a category of LA maintained school, that owns the grounds.



**Resolved:** Trustees provided agreement in principle for Associate Membership for South Wirral High School.

#### *Central Team*

- A meeting of the Growth Committee had taken place immediately prior to this meeting during a which a number of options to grow the central Trust time were outlined.
- There was an imminent need for some changes.
- Ideally there would be three additional posts added to the central team from September:
  - *Primary Schools Operations Officer:* resignations had been received from three key staff in primary schools. During conversations with Headteachers it had become clear that there was a need for an individual with a higher level of skills and as such it was determined that it would be beneficial to create one central role than replace the school staff like for like.
  - *IT manager:* The IT network manager at Padgate academy had resigned. Rather than replace the role, a hybrid role partly working with the academy and partly at the Trust should be created.
  - At some point a full time IT manager would be needed, but a hybrid role would provide sufficient capacity for the next 12 months.
  - *Estates Manager:* A similar hybrid role based partly at Padgate and partly Trust wide was suggested.
  - *School improvement Lead:* This role was not a new addition; and was the role fulfilled currently by Tim Long for the Trust.
  - *Director of Education:* Similarly this was not a new role and was an extension of the role currently undertaken by Vicky Briggs. There was a need to add capacity to support new Primary schools joining the Trust.

**Trustees commented that the hybrid roles would need to stay under review as issues could arise when individuals had two jobs to fulfil.**

#### **Trustees questioned how the roles would be recruited to.**

The Primary Operations Officer would initially be advertised internally.

The IT Manager and Estates Manager would be advertised externally, although internal candidates would be eligible to apply.

The School Improvement Lead would continue to be fulfilled by TL.

The Director of Education role would be advertised internally.

The divide between primary and secondary that currently exists would be changed. The school review framework would remain as it is but all other aspects would be cross phase.

#### **Trustees cautioned that the IT manager role will be a complex role and may bring some confusion for the individual in post along with the line management.**

The role would be based at Padgate receiving support for lower level technical matters and would support AL in leading the Hub.

Longer term the role would become full time.

JC offered to discuss the role more fully.

**Action:** A meeting to be arranged with JC to discuss the IT Manager role.

- There were further roles outlined in the Growth plan that may be required in the longer term, the plan was to create additional capacity to support growth as needed.





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A structure was planned for significant growth, which would introduce increased numbers of particular existing roles.</li> </ul>
<b>16.</b>	<b>Confirm Date and Time of the Next Meeting</b> The next meeting of the Trust Board was agreed for the 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 4pm.

Part one of the meeting closed at 6:15pm

#### Action Log

Item	Action	Owner	Due Date
<b>5</b>	Trustees to return the completed skills audit to AL by the 19 <sup>th</sup> April.	All Trustees	19/04/22
<b>13</b>	AL to issue a call out on GovernoHub for Governors and Trustees to contact BL if they wanted to join TCAT+.	AL	ASAP
<b>14</b>	A proportionate and representative working group to be established to review the gender pay gap. (It was not agreed where the working party would report their findings: Full board or finance, ops and HR?)	AL	ASAP
<b>15</b>	Trustees to provide feedback on the draft meeting schedule to AL by the end of term, by exception.	All Trustees	8 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>15</b>	A meeting to be arranged with JC to discuss the IT Manager role.	AL	